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## **Federal stimulus to fund 19 Iowa road projects**

DES MOINES — Iowa transportation officials Friday awarded contracts for 19 highway and bridge projects using federal stimulus dollars.

Within three days of President Obama signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act being signed into law, Gov. Chet Culver announced the \$56.6 million in projects scattered across the state.

In Eastern Iowa, projects include \$1,048,906 for a bridge replacement on US 218 over Pratt Creek and \$983,635 for a bridge replacement on Iowa 150 over Bear Creek. Taylor Construction of New Vienna is the contractor on both projects.

Culver wanted to put the federal stimulus dollars to work as soon as possible "to create and retain good jobs in Iowa," Culver said.

The projects represent a portion of the approximately \$358.2 million in federal highway stimulus funding appropriated to Iowa, according to Department of Transportation Director Nancy Richardson. Bids for the projects were opened Tuesday, the day that the federal stimulus package became law.

Using the federal stimulus funds for 'ready-to-go' projects will allow the Iowa DOT to accelerate or add other highway projects to the state's five-year transportation improvement program — "Something that would not have been possible without the stimulus funding," Richardson said.

The 19 projects were in the state five-year program, Dena Gray-Fisher of the DOT said.

She expects the DOT to announce more projects next month, including some local projects that will include stimulus funds.

"The local agencies are identifying projects and refining their lists," she said, "and once their lists are prepared, the DOT will let the contracts." The Transportation Commission does not have to approve the local projects.

Work on the projects announced Friday will begin as soon as weather permits. In addition to the construction jobs, the projects will increase the demand for related supplies and services and further economic development in Iowa around the improvements, Culver said.

The DOT can't say how many jobs will be involved in the projects, but contractors will have to provide those numbers later, she said.

The DOT earlier announced a list of \$257 million worth of projects to be funded by the proposed economic stimulus package. The Cedar Rapids metro area is to receive \$6.5 million. The Johnson County Council of Governments will take up a recommendation to do seven projects with approximately \$3.6 million it has been allocated.

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